Data Quality - Common Errors and Useful Reports
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This guide provides users who intake clients a list of most common errors when entering data into HMIS. Many staff members fill out intake forms or enter data into HMIS during an interview with the clients that come to their program. To ensure that quality, valid data is collected and entered into the HMIS database, it is important to understand the definitions of the data elements and where unintentional errors could occur. The document titled *HUD HMIS Data Standards* defines the data standards and can be found on the NH-HMIS website at nh-hmis.org.

At least monthly, you should check your data for errors by running reports. Monitoring data and frequently running reports helps to ensure that errors are caught and are subsequently corrected before the data is needed in your reports. Later in this guide are some useful reports that you can run to help ensure data quality.

**Avoiding Inconsistencies and Unintentional Errors**

In addition to false information, front-line staff also should also be on guard against unintentional errors or inconsistencies. Several types of unintentional errors can occur during the intake process. Additionally, if data entry is done at a different time, other errors could occur, especially if a different person who did the intake is doing the data entry.

If filling out information on an intake form, please make your writing legible!

Some types of general unintentional errors are:

- **The client misunderstands the question.** A common example of this is misunderstanding what is meant by the “Prior Residence” question. A client might wish to give the residence where they lived for years prior to the night before coming to the shelter as opposed to the place they stayed for one night prior to shelter entry.

- **Inconsistent interpretation** of the actual meaning of a field, such as “disability.” Two people with the same condition might give totally different answers regarding whether they have a disability. It is up to the front-line staff to query further to determine which answer is most accurate.

- **Language barriers** can also contribute to misunderstanding the question. If many clients speak only Spanish, for example, it is helpful to have a copy of the questions and answers in Spanish available so clients can read along.

- **Staff members may also sometimes hear the wrong answer,** especially when working with clients with strong accents or language barriers. It is quite easy to hear “No” when someone says “Don’t Know.” The intake space should be quiet and private to ensure that staff can hear clearly and follow up on sensitive questions to make sure they understand the response.

- **Use of nicknames and aliases** is another place where misunderstanding and inconsistency causes problems. Clients who are asked “What is your name” are more likely to provide the name by which they are called than their legal name. Consistency problems occur when the client gives their legal name in one interview and their nickname in a subsequent interview.

- **Misspellings** of names and other fields are common but easy to guard against by following a simple rule of always confirming the spelling. Even a common name like “Adams” could sometimes be spelled “Addams.” Also, circling or highlighting an unusual spelling can help ensure that the data entry staff notices it.
Transposing numbers in dates, zip codes, income, etc.
Accidentally selecting the wrong response from a dropdown list.
Periodically, the NH-HMIS team reviews duplicate data entries in HMIS. There cannot be duplicates in the database, so these client records need to be merged. When duplicate client records created by HMIS Member Agency providers are discovered, the HMIS staff will contact the designated Agency Administrator to notify and address the user creating the duplication.
Incorrect dates! Make sure that dates are correct before saving data.

Common Data Element Errors

This section shows some common errors to watch out for when entering data into HMIS.

Name

- First and Last name are not normally the same.
- No numerals in name fields.
- Suffixes not in last name field.
- Always confirm the spelling of client first and last names.
- Legal first name (do not add nicknames in “quotes” – those are not searchable elements, add a nickname to the Alias field).

Social Security Number

- SSN is all numbers, no letters can be entered.
- 9 digits indicates complete; less than 9 digits indicates a partial (last 4 digits) SSN.
- If client does not know or refuses to provide their SSN, DO NOT enter a fake social security number such as 123-45-6789, 999-99-9999, or xxx-xx-xxxx.

Date of Birth/Age

- Cannot be earlier than current date or program entry date.
- Client cannot be younger than 0, or older than 114 years of age.
- If client cannot remember the year of birth, ask the person’s age and calculate the approximate year of birth.
- If client cannot remember the month or day of birth, record an approximate date of “01” for month and “01” for day. Approximate dates for month and day will allow calculation of a person’s age within one year of their actual age.
- Date of Birth should be the client’s date of birth, not the current date or date entering the program (or service).
- Adults are defined as any person over 18 years of age.
- Client’s entry date into a program cannot be before they were born.
Race/Ethnicity
- Secondary Race ONLY has to be answered if the client self-identifies as more than one race.
- Primary and Secondary race CAN be the same, for example white/white is allowed, but it saves time to not even choose a Secondary Race.
- Secondary race is not required and may be left blank.
- If either Refused or Don’t Know is reported, this data is counted as missing in some reports.

Gender
- Men cannot be pregnant.
- No male in woman’s shelter or woman in men’s shelter.

Veteran Status
- Client under 18 cannot be a Veteran.
- Only veterans in Veteran shelter.
- Those receiving veteran’s pension are marked as “Veteran.”

Disabling Condition
- Those receiving SSDI are marked as having a disability.
- Those indicating substance abuse, mental health, physical disability, developmental disability, or HIV/AIDS are marked as having disability.

Residence Prior to Program Entry / How Long at Place
- Self-reported, not contradicted by other HMIS data.
- Where they slept last night.

Zip Code of Last Permanent Address
- The zip code of the client’s last permanent residence of 90 days or more.
- Look up the zip code if the client knows the city, but not the specific zip code.
- Entering a partial zip code is better than no zip code.
- Zip code has only numbers and is valid.

Program Entry Date/Program Exit Date
- All clients have a program entry date.
- Program Entry Date later than Birth Date.
- Program Entry Date prior to Exit Date.
- Entry and Exit Date not the same in residential shelter.

Households
- No single person in family shelter.
- No family in individual shelter.
- Clients under age 18 cannot be Head of Household (HOH).
• Try to enter all people in the family at the same time, if possible.

**Pregnancy**
• No female under age 15 or over age 55.
• No pregnant males.

**Income/Cash Benefits**
• Enter cash benefits under the person who, if they leave, money goes with them.
• Income needs to be updated annually for permanent housing and permanent supportive housing programs.
• Income must be updated upon exit.

**Non-Cash Benefits**
• Non-Cash Benefits, and Housing Status must be updated upon exit.
• Non-Cash Benefits need to be updated annually for permanent housing and permanent supportive housing programs.

**Housing Status**
• Housing Status must be updated upon exit.

**Unaccompanied Youth Errors**
• No minor in adult shelter; no adult in youth shelter

**Useful Reports to Add to the ServicePoint Dashboard**

**Dashboard Reports that all End Users can run**

**Counts Report**
The ServicePoint dashboard can be customized to display the Count Report that shows the number of clients based on your criteria, giving you a quick and easy way to view information about your clients. Criteria can include, Households with no HOH, clients with entry but no exit, clients with an unmet need, and more.

**Follow Up List**
Follow Up List shows clients that you must follow up on and the follow up date that you determined.

**Dashboard Reports that only Agency Administrators can run**

**0216 Unexited Clients**
This ART report is designed to monitor data quality by ensuring that all clients in selected program/providers have an accurate program exit recorded in a timely manner. The report allows the User the ability to examine the length of stay (LOS) for all unexited clients in up to five selected programs/providers at a time. The User is also prompted to specify the maximum length of stay for each program enabling the report to flag clients whose los has exceeded the limit. In addition to listing all unexited clients along with their entry date and los, the report also calculates the number of unexited clients, the average los for unexited clients, and the number of
clients exceeding their maximum los, for each of the selected programs. Unexited clients mistakenly entered into the program more than once are also flagged.

**Useful Data Quality ART ServicePoint Reports to Run Monthly**

There are several types of Advanced Reporting Tool (ART) reports in ServicePoint. It is helpful to run these reports monthly to ensure data is accurate. It is better to run reports more frequently rather than waiting and later determining you have a data quality issue that could have been corrected early on.

**Data Quality Canned Reports that all End Users can run**

**Client Served Report**
This report will only provide data for agencies recording service transactions and/or needs in ServicePoint. Use the Client Served Report to produce a list of clients your provider has documented as having a need or having received a service. This is an unduplicated client report where each client is only counted once.

**Needs Report**
This report will only provide data for agencies recording service transactions in ServicePoint (which automatically creates service needs). Use this report to view needs and need outcomes entered by providers/organizations. You can run the report for all providers in your system, for a single provider, or for a provider and its child providers. You can run this report for all needs or for one specific need.

**Service Transaction**
This report will only provide data for agencies recording service transactions in ServicePoint. Use the Service Transaction report to view clients' needs and services during a designated time frame. This report includes the clients' name, needs, services, and providers/organizations connected with those needs and services.

**ART Reports that only Agency Administrators or Data Analysts can run**

**0212 Duplicate Clients**
This ART report assists administrators in finding duplicate clients for one or more selected provider(s). The report identifies duplicates by comparing unique client ID numbers and by comparing Social Security numbers. Matches found are listed with relevant information including client ID, client name, providers with matching clients, and date(s) on which the matching clients were created in HMIS.

**0220 Data Incongruity Locator**
This report shows incongruity with client data based on age or household situation. This ART report is the first in a series of reports designed to monitor data quality by locating recorded client data which is missing, is incorrect, or which is inconsistent with other recorded data for the same client. This report focuses on locating errors and incongruities in the areas of age, gender and household relationship. NOTE: This report will not check for state-required data element issues.

**0243 Data Completeness Report Card**
This report shows missing data and is an excellent data quality monitoring tool that produces a letter grade to programs based upon the completion rate for HUD-required universal data elements.
at the time of the client's service start date. In determining the percentage of non-null values, the count includes records where the primary value is null, but the accompanying data quality question is non-null. The percentage calculation also takes into account whether the client is a child, adult, or unaccompanied youth at the time of intake, and whether HUD requires the particular element to be collected for that classification of client. The report can be run for multiple providers and is sectioned by provider so that each provider’s report card will be displayed on a separate page, allowing batch printing. NOTE: This report will not check for state-required data element issues.

0323 Program Demographics
This report provides a breakdown of client demographics and other data for clients who were actively enrolled in a specified program (or programs) during a specified period of time based upon their entry and exits dates and/or shelter-stays.

0550 Exit Destination Outcomes
In addition to basic exit and outcome information, this report groups positive and negative exits by different variables such as household status and the number of services received during the program. As a result, you can see how those variables are associated with destination outcomes after a client exits a program.

0551 Exit Reason for Leaving Outcomes
In addition to basic exit and outcome information, this report groups positive and negative exits by different variables such as household status and the number of services received during the program. As a result, you can see how those variables affect the positive and negative reasons for the client leaving a program.

0554.00 Income Maintenance
This report shows whether a client has maintained or improved their income during their stay. Therefore, any instances of no change or any increase in income during a stay are counted as positive. If there is no recorded income at entry and no increase in income during the selected reporting period, this will be counted as negative.

0554.01 Income Improvement
This report shows the outcome of the 0554.00 Income Maintenance Report more rigorously and determines whether a client has improved their income during their stay. Therefore, any instances of an increase in income during a stay are counted positively. However, instances in which there is no change in client income are counted negatively, since income is not improving.

0625 HUD COC APR
This ART Gallery report facilitates the extraction of data from HMIS for the completion of the CoC APR. The layout of the report is patterned after the HDX data input screen to facilitate online reporting. A companion ART Gallery Report, the #0631, provides several data detail and data quality tabs to assist the user in ensuring that the data to be reported are complete and accurate.

0629 HIC Housing Inventory Chart
This report produces the HUD Housing Inventory Chart required for the annual NOFA application. The HIC is designed to accurately reflect each Continuum of Care’s (CoC) capacity to house homeless and formerly homeless persons. The HIS is a complete inventory of emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing beds available in the CoC. The inventory should include all HUD-funded residential
programs, as well as non-HUD funded programs that provide housing to homeless and formerly homeless persons, even if those programs do not actively participate in the CoC planning process.

0630 Sheltered/Unsheltered PIT
This report provides the client and household data needed to complete the sheltered portion of the “Homeless Populations” tab and the “Homeless Subpopulation” tab in the Annual Point-In-Time module of the HUD HDX. This information relates to clients being served in an Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, or Safe Haven Program at the time of the annual homeless count. This report also provides the client and household level detail to assist in documentation and data quality processes. The report can be easily modified to consider entry exits only. This report is also targeted towards different age groups, broken down by children, adults, and other targeted populations.

0631 HUD CoC APR Detail
This report is a companion to report 0625 and displays the details behind the CoC APR report. This report consists of several tabs, each tab focusing on specific portions of the CoC data. The report also includes features to assist in data quality monitoring such as null data flags, identification of non-HUD question values, and duplicate clients.